

NEW GOVERNMENT OR NEW SYSTEM?

A SPECIAL PATH FOR MOROCCO

Helmut Reifeld

Much has changed on the political front in Morocco in recent months, and many of these changes will have a long-term influence on the country's future. The country is attempting to steer a course into the 21st century between the Arab Spring and centuries-old power structures to create a society built on openness, a desire for social change and a willingness to embrace political reform.

Those familiar with Arab politics have often argued that what distinguishes the monarchies in the region from legitimate republican rulers is that the former are still held in high regard and esteem by the people. Monarchies generally understand how to retain this respect by dealing with potential unrest or budding protests as quickly as possible, either by offering some kind of material benefits or instigating prudent political reforms. On these occasions, the line between superficial appeasement and a true understanding of the problem can often be somewhat blurred. What is clear, however, is that since the beginning of the Arab Spring, no other Arab ruler has been as politically accommodating as Mohammed VI of Morocco.

THE NOVEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The Moroccan King did not merely react; he took active preventative measures. He instigated changes before these could be demanded by protesters, particularly at the beginning of the constitutional reform process. And he stayed his course. The new constitution, issued on 9 March 2001 and enacted by referendum on 1 July 2011, respected the country's cultural plurality and the legitimacy of the



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government chosen by the people in democratic elections. This significantly reduced the King's prerogatives in the three key areas of religion, security and strategic political decision-making. Precisely what these changes would mean in practice was one of the main issues debated during the early elections for the lower chamber of Parliament on 25 November and the subsequent forming of the government. Would the King actually relinquish significant political powers? Would the political parties be prepared in any case to play by the new democratic rules? And would the Islamist parties and groups in particular wield their new-found power responsibly?

Doubtless the criticisms voiced in the run-up to the election were justifiable. Only 13.5 million of the approximately 20 million people eligible to vote had been registered. Moroccans living abroad, serving in the army or in law enforcement, or who were incarcerated were not allowed to vote. Concurrently, for the first time there was a statutory requirement for the elections to be monitored, and the extensive number of national and international observers permitted to monitor the elections rated them as free, fair and proper. It was also the most peaceful Election Day in the country's history. Even the extremely low turnout – often grounds for the legitimacy of an election to be called into question – set a new record at 45.4 per cent. And this despite the fact that, while the people generally trusted the King, they didn't have much faith in democracy.

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Because of changes to the constitutional framework, structural changes had also been put in place for the new elections, which had been brought forward by one year. The number of parliamentary seats had been increased from 325 in the previous legislative period to 395. This number is made up of 305 direct mandates from the newly (and more fairly) drawn up constituencies plus two national lists, one with 60 seats reserved for women, and one with 30 seats for "young" members of parliament (under the age of 40). The electorate could vote for or against these lists en bloc. The fact that there were no women amongst the 30 "young" candidates shows the extent to which tradition still plays a part, even amongst the younger generation.

Under these circumstances, there was little more the losers in the election could do once the votes had been counted than – also for the first time in the country’s history – to congratulate the victors, the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), who came out of the elections head-and-shoulders above their rivals. Everyone expected them to win; but what was not clear was the scope of their victory and how the power structure of the established parties would react.

Table 1

Parties standing for election in the Moroccan parliamentary elections of 2011

Major parties	Seats 2011	Seats 2007	Brief description
PJD	107	46	The Justice and Development Party (PJD) was founded in 1995 as the MPCD. Since the parliamentary elections of 2002, it had been the strongest party in opposition. Abdelilah Benkirane has been Secretary General since 2008. It is the largest party in Parliament following the 2011 elections. It is considered to be a moderate Islamist party.
PI	60	52	The Independence Party (Istiqlal or PI) is Morocco’s oldest party. Founded on 10 December 1943, its main aims for the period after the end of the French Protectorate were independence for Morocco and the restoration of the monarchy. The party is considered to be conservative and nationalistic. Abbas el Fassi has been Secretary General since 1994. He was Prime Minister from 2007 to 2011.
RNI	52	39	The National Rally of Independents (RNI) was founded in 1978 and has always been considered a party of technocrats. Since the end of the 1990s, it has positioned itself as a moderate conservative party. In terms of economic policies it tends to be more liberal. Salaheddine Mezouar has been Secretary General since 2010. In the run-up to the elections in 2011 it formed an alliance with seven other parties known as the G8.
PAM	47	0	The Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) was founded in 2008 by former Secretary of State Fouad el Himma, who also acted as its Secretary General up to the formation of the current government. It is often described as the King’s party, because its explicit objective is to strengthen the powers of King Mohammed VI. Many observers believe it was also formed to curb the power of the PJD. In the run-up to the 2011 elections, the PAM initiated the founding of the Alliance for Democracy.

Major parties	Seats 2011	Seats 2007	Brief description
USFP	39	38	Following a split within the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP) – which itself had split from the Istiqlal in 1959 – the main rump of the party was renamed the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USPF) in 1975. In 2002, the party won 52 seats and became the largest party in Morocco. Since 2007, its elections results have been declining. The party is considered to be left-leaning, especially when it comes to issues such as social justice and discrimination. Abdelwahed Radi (former Justice Minister) has been its Secretary General since 2008.
MP	32	41	The Popular Movement (MP) was founded in 1958, immediately after Morocco gained independence, and represents the interests of the Berbers in particular. The party tends to be fairly liberal on economic issues, but more conservative on social issues. Since 1994, its Secretary General has been Mohand Laenser, who is currently Minister of the Interior.
UC	23	27	The Constitutional Union (UC) was founded in 1983 by then prime minister Maâti Bouabid and belongs to a group of liberal parties on the centre-right. It is particularly interested in creating a modern constitutional monarchy. Mohamed Abied is currently Secretary General of the party.
PPS	18	17	The Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) was founded in 1974 as the successor to the Party of Liberation and Socialism, which itself developed out of the Moroccan Communist Party in 1969. Since the 1990s, it has been trying to rid itself of its communist legacy. Its General Secretary is Mohamed Nabil Benabdallah, the new Minister for Housing.
Others	17 ¹		
Total	395		

Source: Figures cf. *L'Economist*, 28 Nov 2011, 1-5.

The PJD did not primarily base its election campaign on religious, 'Islamist' issues, but rather on concrete calls for, and promises of, social, economic and domestic policies based on the fundamental values of social justice. However, it succeeded in separating itself from its political opponents by adopting an open, grass-roots political style, which it hoped would help the party to avoid being dragged down into the morass of political disenchantment that pervades Morocco. In fact, it was able to turn this disenchantment to its own advantage. Bearing in mind the very low voter turnout, the PJD's share of the vote in absolute terms can hardly be described as spectacular or as evidence of the country's growing Islamisation. But it was evidence of a

1 | Remaining 17 seats account for ten other parties.

protest against a much-discredited party system, of the legitimacy needed for a new parliamentary beginning and of the chance to achieve the kind of peaceful top-down reform process that is possible even in the Arab

world. Even Morocco's most famous literary figure, Tahar Ben Jelloun, who had been at critical loggerheads with Islam for decades, was quoted as saying: "If the PJD succeeds in doing away with corruption, I'll become an Islamist."²

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THE LONG WAIT FOR A GOVERNMENT TO BE FORMED

Coalition negotiations and forming a cabinet lasted almost six weeks before the outcome was finally announced on 3 January 2012. The result was the first democratically elected government under the new constitution. It was also the first Moroccan government not only to have the PJD as a member, but also to be actually directly led by it. Under the new constitution, the King was obliged to offer the representatives of the party that won the most seats in the democratic elections the opportunity to form a government. This was the PJD. Its leader is Abdelilah Benkirane, an engineer whose family had close ties to the Istiqlal party.

The two main questions that took so much time to address were exactly who the coalition partners would be in a government led by Benkirane, and what expectations, reactions and reservations might emanate from the royal court. Negotiations about possible coalition compromises and which candidates should take on the various ministerial posts went on for six weeks. The list of potential coalition partners was somewhat limited. The PAM – whose *raison d'être* since being founded in 2008 has been to resist the growing influence of the Islamists – was ruled out from the onset. It was in fact the only party that Benkirane ruled out of coalition talks. The USFP also signalled early on that it was not interested, not so much because of ideological scruples, but more because it was falling apart internally. Apart from these two, all the other larger parties were considered potential coalition partners, while the ten smaller parties would not have been much

2 | "Si le PJD arrive à lutter contre la corruption, je deviendrai islamiste.", *France Inter*, 30 Nov 2011.

of a help in creating a majority, even if they had been prepared to vote en bloc.

As the weeks went by, all manner of potential coalitions seemed possible. During the election campaign itself, there had already been two alliances represented, and of these the decades-old Koutla alliance did relatively well. At the head of the alliance was the traditional independence party Istiqlal, which increased its number of seats from 52 to 60, along with the Socialist Union of Popular Forces and the Party of Progress and Socialism. The alliance did not offer itself as a potential coalition partner immediately after the

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elections, but was approached directly by the PJD. In contrast, another alliance, called the G8 and made up of eight mostly smaller parties, emerged from the elections as the clear loser. This short-lived electoral alliance, including several smaller parties that were no longer represented in Parliament anyway, had basically lost its *raison d'être* at the point when the PJD won the election – far more so than the Koutla alliance – and was at the point of disbanding. From within the G8 alliance, only the Popular Movement (MP), which had lost a quarter of its seats, had immediately signalled its willingness to enter into a coalition with the PJD. The National Rally of Independents (RNI) and the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) were also part of the G8 alliance. The RNI leader, Salaheddine Mezouar, had been the Minister of Economy and Finance before the election, while the driving force behind the PAM, Fuad Ali Himma, was a childhood friend of the King's and one of the PJD's biggest critics. At the end of December 2011, he left the party to become an adviser to the King at the royal court.

These were by no means the first coalition discussions in the history of Morocco's Parliament to be brought to a conclusion not as a result of clear political agreement, or even of clear political differences, but because of time pressures and a willingness to compromise. The Istiqlal, who symbolise Moroccan independence, were not only the first party to be contacted, but were also regularly involved in the negotiations from the very beginning. At the end of the negotiations, a coalition was formed, made up of the PJD, Istiqlal, MP and PPS. During parallel discussions on

who would take over which ministerial positions, the PJD appears to have been forced to make the most compromises. The PPS only had 18 seats in Parliament but came away as the biggest winners, relatively speaking, with a total of four ministers.

Nevertheless, the new cabinet list contained a whole number of promising names. Several ministers could even be considered to be of symbolic importance. This is particularly true of Mustapha Ramid, the new Minister for "Justice et les Libertés". During the coalition negotiations, his name was apparently the only one on the PJD's list that Benkirane had insisted upon. Ramid is one of the most effective operators within the PJD, and is well-known as one of the most vocal critics of the monarchy's influence on politics. He combines legal expertise with extensive political experience and a recognised sense of moral integrity. For many in the PJD, he is the very embodiment of their ideals. The same can be said of Saâd-Eddine Al Othmani, who started out as a psychiatrist and, until July 2008, was Benkirane's predecessor as Secretary General of the PJD. For many years, he has been seen as the ideological head of the PJD and the pragmatic force behind the party. Today, he holds the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Following the terror attack in Marrakesh on 16 May 2011, the party had him to thank in particular that the PJD were not thrown into a negative light.

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There are also some very well known names amongst the ranks of the coalition partners, such as the new Minister of the Interior Mohand Laenser (MP). He is seen as both a technocrat with significant political experience and as an experienced, democratically-minded "thoroughbred" politician. He is also the leader of the popular Berber movement, which was not considered particularly important for Morocco by previous governments, but which enjoys a much higher profile under the new constitution. In contrast, Nizar Baraka (Istiqlal), the new Finance Minister, embodies a greater openness to the outside world and an understanding of the challenges of globalisation. He may be the youngest minister in the cabinet, but with his international contacts and economic expertise he is a firm advocate of ensuring that greater numbers of the country's politically

aware population understand the unwritten laws of globalisation better than in the past. Both these politicians are considered to be real assets for the coalition.

There is one area where Benkirane's choices have been met with constant criticism and incomprehension since the day the new cabinet was formed, and that is the number of women in the cabinet. He, of all people, only asked one woman to join the cabinet: Bassima Hakkaoui (PJD), the "Ministre de la solidarité, de la femme et de la famille et du développement social". The fact that Hakkaoui was also considered a controversial choice because many of the statements she made were considered to be *tonitruante* (fulminating) even within the PJD itself, just added to the general sense of incomprehension. As one of Benkirane's trademarks during the election campaign was to be constantly aware of just what message was being put across by appearances, there was an almost universal sense of shock when, in the official photo with the King and the heir to the throne, taken on the evening of

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3 January, there was only one female face to be seen out of 35, and indeed it was difficult to make out because the face was mostly covered. Morocco has been seen as something of a role model within the Arab world when it comes to equality. In the last government, seven women had held ministerial positions and there had been a similar number in the two legislative periods before that. All of the four current ruling parties could have nominated excellent female candidates, who had all achieved a significant amount of recognition during the election campaign.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PJD

During the 2011 election campaign and the King's subsequent invitation to form a government, not for the first time the PJD had to quickly adapt to the demands of everyday politics in Morocco. It had already leapfrogged certain stages in its development – stages that other Islamic parties in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt had had to work through much more intensively in a very short space of time. In the early days after it was established in 1995, there was a considerable amount of debate relating to religious dogma, including issues such as banning alcohol,

separating men and women on bathing beaches, the categorical exclusion of homosexual artists and even chopping off the hands of thieves, as demanded by Sharia law. But all this has become a thing of the past. The less significance the party has attached to such issues, the more its support has grown amongst voters. When it first stood for election in 1997, the PJD won only nine seats. By 2002 this had grown to 42 and five years later it had reached 46. In light of recurring rumours that the results of previous elections were manipulated to the detriment of the PJD, it seems that the improved transparency of these elections was an advantage for the party.

In contrast to the Islamic parties in other Arab countries, the PJD has never been banned or exiled. It has been in the public arena for many years and has been monitored accordingly. In the latest election campaign, its candidates emphasised repeatedly that every individual should make their own choices when it comes to what they wear, eat and drink. Women's rights in Morocco are also fairly firmly rooted. Indeed, the PJD itself has 18 women MPs, more than any other party. The new constitution also guarantees a large number of human rights and freedoms, along with wide-ranging accountability. According to recent polls, up to 80 per cent of the population are prepared to grant Benkirane a leap of faith, particularly as many Moroccans have little trust in mainstream politicians. So Benkirane should have an excellent chance of making things "better" during the current term.

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Benkirane has also been granted an astonishing amount of legitimacy on the political stage. He is well-known for being a clever strategist and practical tactician. But his rise to the position of Prime Minister is not just down to his notorious "peasant shrewdness". By openly and directly modelling his party on the Turkish AKP, it has clearly become more pragmatic, cosmopolitan and perhaps even more "secular". Today it presents itself as a conservative, religiously moderate party that has left behind its former rigorism and is open to pragmatic solutions. In any case, it would now be very difficult for the PJD to return to a more fundamentalist Islamic ideology both institutionally and under the bright spotlight of public opinion.

However, the PJD's relationship with its "Islamist" past cannot only be managed in a pragmatic way. The party does not represent the whole spectrum of "Islamist" beliefs in Morocco, nor can it simply disassociate itself from this relationship. As in other Arab countries, the development of Islamism in Morocco over the last few decades has varied widely. It is hard to separate out the main trends as there is a lot of overlap and many grey areas. The Justice and Spirituality movement (Al Adl wal Ihsane) is particularly influential in the political arena. Generally known as Al Adl, it is not a recognised party, but a political group that has espoused non-violence since distancing itself from its radical, Jihadist wing. Now it is working systematically to form political policy based on democratic principles. Its influence and potential to mobilise support amongst the Moroccan people is no less than that of the PJD. The association is entirely centered on the personality of 83-year-old Sheikh Abdeslam Yasine, the charismatic leader of the Moroccan Islamist movement, who can also claim to be a kind of spiritual father to many of the PJD's representatives.³

We cannot ignore the open letter published by Al Adl just days after the new government was formed, in which it voiced strong criticisms of the PJD. In particular, it accused the election victors of irresponsibility due to their willingness to compromise and claimed that their "brothers" in the PJD were engaged in forming a government that could not be reconciled with shared Islamic interests. It also accused the ruling party of allowing itself to be a pawn of the Makhzen, the governing elite centred on the King, and of having subordinated itself to an undemocratic institution and preventing the "power of the Arab Spring" from having an effect in Morocco.⁴ In this respect, it is first of all important that at the end of December 2011, Al Adl distanced itself from the influential and widespread Mouvement 20 Février (M20) protest movement in which it had played a leading role over the previous six months. Secondly, it should not be forgotten that open letters have been rare, but nonetheless significant, occurrences over the last decades when it comes to shaping political Islamism in Morocco. These letters could

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3 | Cf. Youssef Belal, *Le Cheikh et le Calife. Sociologie religieuse de l'Islam politique au Maroc*, Lyon, 2011.

4 | *Telquel*, 21 Jan 2012.

be seen as a sign that there are tendencies within the PJD that are not as royalist and pragmatic as Benkirane.

The new government is able to begin its work feeling that it has been given a strong mandate. The PJD was certainly not only voted in by "Islamists", but also by protest voters who were sick and tired of corruption and nepotism. The legitimacy of the Benkirane government was also a result of the way many other parties have lost credibility, and for this reason it is being monitored all the more closely. In positive terms, this government's legitimacy is first and foremost rooted in the fact that it is the result of free, democratic elections and based on a new constitution that strengthens the work and existence of the opposition as much as that of the government. This is one of the reasons why the initial belief that Moroccan society was in danger of Islamisation has now lost its credibility.

A FRESH POLITICAL START?

What are the main challenges and possible ways forward for the new government? In his first regular cabinet meeting on 5 January, Benkirane sketched out the priorities from his point of view. The idea of "serving the citizen" acted as a kind of leitmotiv throughout the meeting. The first thing he stressed to his cabinet was that being a minister did not mean a chance to line their own pockets. He told them he would be providing the public with regular updates on what the government was doing. Apart from the battle against corruption, which is to be fought with the help of a national charter, he said that the government's main focus would be on four sectors: education, health, employment and housing. The previous government had left these sectors in disarray. He also stated that primary education must be guaranteed across the whole country, along with basic healthcare. And over the next five years, unemployment should be reduced from its present level of 16.7 per cent to less than 10 per cent.⁵

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So the government's main focus is on economic and social policies. In the PJD's election manifesto it promised to increase minimum wage to 3,000 dirham a month (around

5 | *L'Economist*, 6 Jan 2012, 1-5.

273 euros). This pledge proved to be very popular and attracted a lot of attention during the election campaign. It was decided that this issue should be negotiated by the unions to begin with, rather than at cabinet level. Nevertheless, Morocco has the highest minimum wage of any African country. Since 2009 the Smig (Salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti) has been set at 2,110 dirham a month (around 192 euros), or 10.64 dirham (97 cents) an hour. In July 2011, it was increased by ten per cent, and another five per cent increase is planned for 2012. But it is no secret that this is unlikely to be adhered to outside the major cities.

On the one hand, the prognosis for Morocco's economic growth is relatively good. The Moroccan Planning Commission is expecting growth to increase from 4.1 per cent in 2011 to between 4.2 and 4.9 per cent this year. The IMF is predicting an increase in real GDP to 6 per cent from around 4.5 per cent in 2011.⁶ But on the other hand, the promises the government made regarding social reforms when it came to power are immense. It is also difficult to predict what effect the eurozone crisis will have on Morocco. Until now, agriculture, tourism and the textile industry have provided its main sources of income, but the future of these sectors is by no means guaranteed. And investment in solar energy and other modern technologies has so far not brought the desired results.

When it comes to the economy, Benkirane is open to a range of different views, and he is happy to listen to economic experts from outside his own party. The economy is an area where the PJD has clearly come back down to earth with a bump. Benkirane's first foreign trip after taking office was to the World Economic Forum in Davos. Just a few weeks after taking power, it is already clear that the honeymoon is over, and the election campaign in which he was keen to show his closeness to the "ordinary people" and to mobilise consent is now a thing of the past. Instead, it is now a case of taking concrete steps in order to turn promises into policy.

After a few weeks with Benkirane being in power, it is already clear that the closeness to the "ordinary people" is now a thing of the past. Instead, it is now a case of taking concrete steps in order to turn promises into policy.

6 | Cf. Oxford Business Group, *Economic Update*, 5 Jan 2012.

Benkirane has certainly stated the objectives, but has yet to produce a blueprint. For example, it remains a mystery how a youth unemployment rate of virtually 30 per cent is to be brought down to the promised 10 per cent. The new constitution also calls for changes to the constitutional state, but as yet the government has not made any proposals in this respect. Above all, this relates to the independence of the judiciary, further decentralisation of political jurisdiction, Berber equality and concrete steps to halt corruption. However, there are also many specific issues to be dealt with, such as the abolition of the death penalty. Statements on foreign policy issues are also still very muted. What new opportunities would present themselves if the Algerian border were to be partially opened up? Are new initiatives needed in terms of developing joint policies for the Maghreb states? Political pundits are still waiting for specific policy statements on all these issues.

This politically aware section of the population is represented by the popular protest movement M20.⁷ To some extent, this movement forms the Moroccan element of the Arab Spring, and its demands for full parliamentary democracy and a commitment to fight corruption indirectly made a major contribution to the PJD's election victory. So far, the movement has almost totally followed the path of non-violence, and the security forces have also generally avoided any escalation of violence during the many protests that have taken place. But there is no guarantee that this will remain the case, as the M20 still has the potential to mobilise a great deal of support that could be difficult to control. On top of this, the advent of a new government has changed people's expectations. A failure to see concrete improvements could well lead to more protests or even rioting.

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When evaluating its possible courses of action, the new government also has to deal with structural problems of a kind that were not faced by previous governments. The chances of success are very much bound up with the relationship between the royal court and the growth of Islamism. In this

7 | Cf. L'an 1 de la cyber démocratie au Maroc. 20 février 2011, préface par Mohamed Sassi, Editions Hammouch, Casablanca, Feb 2012.

context, Benkirane's oft-quoted saying during the election campaign that "L'état c'est le Roi" seems amusing rather than persuasive. This view of the monarchy is addressed to a King who has always been critical of Islamism, or indeed even rejected it. The talk is of polarisation between the modern King and the conservative government, and indeed this does present a real antithesis. But this antithesis is not as irreconcilable as it may seem. The two sides are perhaps not really so far apart, as they both agree that they want to find peaceful, democratic solutions.

This is also reflected in the fact that the reactions of the monarchy to the new government have been structured, discerning and developed with a view to the long-term. Fuad Ali Himma was not the only one to be called to join the royal court as a "conseiller". Last summer, the King had already begun expanding and restructuring his circle of personal advisors. Omar Azziman, the former Justice Minister, and Taieb Fassi-Fihri, Moroccan Foreign Minister from 2007 to 2011, also joined their ranks, resulting in the number of advisors almost doubling. They are now the highest-ranking and most uniform group of advisors in the history of Morocco's democracy, and for the government this of course means its strongest opponents are surrounding the King rather than sitting in Parliament.

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A second step was the appointment of a great many *ministres délégués* who had been personally selected by the King and whose names to a large extent only became known when the new cabinet was unveiled on 3 January. These royal delegates have been mainly appointed to key areas of foreign affairs, internal affairs, industry and defence, in addition to those ministers appointed by the government. As a result, the cabinet has now expanded to a total of 35 ministers. This hypertrophic executive branch is reminiscent of the shadow cabinet in the UK, but with the difference that it is not part of the opposition but actually sits at the cabinet table and has its own remit.

There is no doubt that King Mohammed VI retains his popularity among the people and continues to enjoy great legitimacy. The Moroccan people do not seem to support the calls by parts of the M20 to reduce the power of the consti-

tutional monarchy to a purely symbolic level, and calls for a republic are rarely heard. Nevertheless, from 2012, the King will have to work with a stronger Parliament that increasingly has much more democratic clout.

With all this in mind, the elections to the lower chamber of the Moroccan Parliament can be viewed as a success for the country's ongoing democratisation and constitutionality. The upcoming elections to the second chamber in 2012 will serve to bolster this process. It seems highly likely that these elections will prove to be a step towards renewed stability and a legitimacy that has been achieved by reform rather than revolution. This is combined with an increase in transparency and new opportunities for participation. In future, corruption will be closely watched and the parties will be held accountable in a much more systematic way.

This change has been made possible thanks to the steps taken by the King during 2011, and it is supported by most of the country's political parties and the majority of the people. To some extent, this strengthens Morocco on two fronts: by giving it both royal and democratic legitimacy. The changes in Morocco prove to the whole region of North Africa and the Middle East that there are different roads to democracy. But if it is to become a model for other countries, Morocco must be given the international support it deserves.